

**Prepared Remarks of Chairman Julius Genachowski  
Federal Communications Commission**

**“Learning and Growing in a Digital Age”**

**Common Sense Media Forum  
Mountain View, CA  
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Thank you, Jim Steyer, for that introduction, and thanks to Common Sense Media for hosting today's forum.

I've been looking forward to this event ever since Jim invited me, because when you're with Jim Steyer, it's never boring. Last time we were together – this is true – I was interviewed by Elmo. My street cred with my pre-schooler peaked at that moment.

Thank you to our other sponsors: PBS, The Children's Partnership and USC's Annenberg Center on Communication Leadership and Policy.

Thank you to today's panelists and to the terrific FCC team led by Roger Goldblatt that helped put together the amazing technology showcase today.

We're very fortunate to have Karen Cator here. We've never had stronger leadership at the Department of Education. With Secretary Arne Duncan at the helm, and Karen driving technology policy, the Department of Education is making a major difference every day in the lives of our nation's students.

I've been in the Back to School spirit for the past month. My three kids started pre-school, first grade, and college.

It's striking how much technology is part of kids' lives today. Children are using multiple devices to consume 11 hours of content a day. They send a text message an average of once every 10 minutes they're awake.

There's a lot to be concerned about here, and I don't know a parent who isn't.

We need to find common-sense strategies to mitigate the risks of the new technologies, including the safety and the privacy of children online.

We need to establish new norms for families; new strategies for the home and for when kids are on the move.

I'm pleased to announce that we are launching a new Parent's Place on the FCC website, with information on parental controls for media, online child safety, and childhood obesity. You can visit it at [FCC.Gov-slash-parents](http://FCC.Gov-slash-parents), and I hope you will.

This builds on prior successful and ongoing efforts like the *Net Cetera* guide on online safety, an interagency effort that includes the FCC and was developed with the leadership of FTC Chairman Jon Leibowitz and Education Secretary Duncan.

Of course, Common Sense Media has been leading the charge on children's issues for years. I'm proud to know this first hand. We all applaud Common Sense.

I believe that the Internet – high-speed wired and wireless broadband – is creating new opportunities for innovation as parents hunger for help. New opportunities for business innovators and social innovators. New tools for parents in this challenging always-on, always on-the-move world. New educational content and services and apps.

Technology can and must be a key part of the solution to the problems technology creates. Real solutions that address real and growing needs and that honor the First Amendment.

Because here's the truth: We can't slow technology, and we shouldn't try.

And I believe that the *opportunities* of new communications technologies for our kids far exceed the risks. Indeed, I think it's mandatory in the digital age – in our global digital economy – that we seize the opportunities of technology for our children; that we ensure universal access and digital literacy for all our kids; that we ensure that all our children, no matter the town or the school district they're from, have the tools they need to be full participants in our digital economy and 21<sup>st</sup> century democracy.

Harnessing the opportunities of the digital age – for our economy and our democracy – has been our focus at the FCC for the year since President Obama honored me with this appointment.

This past March, the FCC published America's first National Broadband Plan – an ambitious strategy to bring the benefits of high-speed Internet to all Americans, spurring job creation, innovation, and widespread opportunity.

Later this week, I expect that the FCC will take its most significant step yet toward implementing the Plan's recommendations to fulfill broadband's promise to improve education.

This Thursday, the Commission will vote on, and I believe adopt, a major modernization of the successful E-Rate program.

These changes will help bring fast, affordable Internet access to schools and libraries across the country, and help ensure that America's students have the high-tech skills they need to compete and succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

No question, broadband Internet can bring a wave of unprecedented opportunity for our children. It has the potential to improve every aspect of their lives – how they connect with families and friends, how they receive care when they're sick, and how they learn.

No area has greater potential to transform the lives of our children than education, and no technological innovation in our lifetime has greater potential to transform education than broadband Internet.

We know this to be true: when our schools win, our country wins – because education is at the core of the American dream and central to a thriving economy.

That's why it's so important that we press forward with a modernized E-Rate at this time of economic distress. Bringing broadband Internet and digital tools to our schools, libraries and communities will provide economic opportunity now and in the future.

Many of you know of the E-Rate program.

Established in 1996, it provides discounts for schools and libraries to obtain affordable Internet access.

The program has met its original goals set in a dial-up world, but needs to be taken to the next level. It needs to be updated for a broadband world.

At broadband-connected schools, students can access the best libraries in the country, the best learning tools, the best teachers. A high-school student in a rural town without a calculus teacher can learn calculus remotely, or physics, or Mandarin. They can get tutoring from eager college and grad students anywhere in the country.

This is not pie-in-the-sky. It's happening right now – but in too few places. With broadband, we can bring educational benefits to all of our children and communities. We can build the classrooms of the 21<sup>st</sup> century everywhere.

Distance learning and remote tutoring won't alone solve our countries education challenges. But broadband *can* help schools and students in struggling communities have real opportunity, real access to the best education can offer.

Connected schools also are a requirement for digital literacy. Study after study shows the risk we face in a global economy if we fall behind on education, particularly the STEM subjects – science, technology, engineering and math. We fail our students if we don't teach them basic digital skills. Jobs increasingly require online applications and basic online skills.

The Order I expect the Commission to adopt will also embrace the potential of *mobile* broadband for schools and students, and the promise of digital textbooks, enabling learning anytime, anywhere. Through a new pilot program, students who now carry 50

pounds of textbooks in their backpacks can instead have digital textbooks with up-to-date materials and cutting-edge interactive learning tools.

Education doesn't stop at the schoolyard gate or the library door, so support of broadband for education shouldn't stop there either.

Using mobile learning devices in school and at home, students can learn using interactive programs tailored to their skill set. New devices and applications, integrating school work and homework, can also allow parents and teachers to better monitor and evaluate student progress.

Because of their lower cost, mobile devices can also help advance digital equity, bringing broadband to the home of children from economically disadvantaged communities.

Early experimentation demonstrates the potential of on-the-go learning. In Onslow County, North Carolina, high school students were given smartphones with 24/7 Internet access. The students who were taught math on these learning devices were more likely to achieve proficiency in Algebra than classmates who had the same teacher, but weren't given phones.

Our new Mobile Ed pilot program and our other actions later this week in implementing the National Broadband Plan's recommendations are fundamentally about empowering schools and eliminating regulations that don't make sense.

Giving schools more choices for broadband connectivity – enabling schools to pick among the full range of choices in the marketplace; enhancing competition; providing more bang for the E-Rate buck.

The FCC's National Broadband Plan laid out a vision of broadband-enabled, cutting-edge learning inside and outside the classroom. It's a vision that builds on the pioneering work and ongoing leadership of Senators Rockefeller and Snowe, Congressman Markey and others, and owes so much to their efforts.

Our National Broadband Plan found what teachers already know: that basic broadband connectivity is too often too slow today to keep up with the latest high-tech education.

Almost 80 percent of E-rate recipients say they need faster connections to meet the speed and capacity demands of schools and libraries. Some still have dial-up and schools need bandwidth to meet the demands of today and tomorrow.

The FCC E-Rate Order will also help deliver on the Broadband Plan's goal of super high-speed anchor institutions in every community.

We will give libraries as well as schools the ability to use E-Rate funds to connect to broadband in the most cost-effective way possible, giving schools and libraries the choice

of contracting to light dark fiber already in the ground, or with existing state, regional, and local networks.

With these fiber networks, schools and libraries can provide students and communities with cutting-edge connectivity -- *and* save millions of dollars.

Faster networks that are more affordable -- that's what these changes will mean for schools, libraries and communities.

In doing this, we'll be building on isolated successes in parts of the country.

For example, the Tri-County Educational Service Center in Wooster, Ohio, which serves more than 30,000 students in 19 school districts, was able to save 50 percent through the use of dark fiber, while increasing network performance by 750 percent.

Broadband speed matters. So does broadband access. As part of the modernized E-Rate program, our Order will allow schools, if they choose, to open their doors after hours to their communities.

Think of these as "School Spots" that can provide online access for job searching, digital-skills training, or government services for those who don't have access to the Internet

E-rate has been a success, but it's time to reboot it for the 21st century.

It's the right time to build on its success for the broadband era.

It's the right time to give schools and libraries more flexibility to meet the broadband needs of their students and communities.

It's the right time to start to bring wireless tools to education and unleash the power of digital textbooks.

It's the right time because, in this global economy, our students must have all the tools they need to compete and win.

As President Obama has said, "Leadership tomorrow depends on how we educate our students today."

Let's work together, seize the potential of the digital age, and build an education system that will help deliver on the American dream in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for all of our children.

Thank you.